



ABIDING IN CHRIST,
ABOUNDING IN HOPE

JUNE/JULY 2005

SECTION C



Far Left
Dr. Jeremiah
Wright

Left
Dr. Randall
Bailey and
Dr. Theresa Fry
Brown

"COME, LISTEN...GO, SERVE...GOD IS STILL SPEAKING"

Pre-Synod event both inspired and informed

On April 1 and 2, Victory Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, hosted a Conference-wide, Pre-Synod Event, featuring the inspired preaching of Dr. Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Lifting up the powerful truth of the gospel, and leading the congregation in singing tunes from "Grazin' in the Grass" to "The Way We Were," Dr. Wright both challenged and delighted his listeners. He offered a compelling reminder for us to keep our eyes focused on God, refusing the many distractions of the world.

On Saturday morning an outstanding panel of church leaders and scholars reflected on the theme "Listening to the Stillspeaking God: Lessons for the Emerging Church." Moderated by Associate Conference Minister Bennie Liggins, the panel includ-

ed Dr. Theresa Fry Brown of Candler School of Theology, Dr. Randall Bailey of the Interdenominational Theological Center, Dr. Kenneth Samuel of Victory Church, Conference Minister Timothy Downs, and Associate Conference Minister Joyce Hollyday. Their reflections, reaped from both the church and the academy, offered a feast of food for thought.

A youth jazz trio entertained us at an abundant lunch spread,

generously provided by Victory Church. The church's powerful choirs and energetic dance troupes added grace notes of beauty and eloquence to the weekend's worship services. The event raised anticipation for all the prayer, preaching, and pageantry that lie ahead at General Synod XXV.



The children's dance troupe of
Victory Church

JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

General Synod is on its way!



General Synod XXV will offer many opportunities for us in the Southeast Conference to learn, share, host, pray, volunteer, and celebrate. There will be something for everyone, from a school-kit service project to a Southern music extravaganza, from special meals and inspiring worship to a keynote address by Coretta Scott King — not to mention resolutions and other business of the United Church of Christ. Opportunities to volunteer, attend pre-Synod events, sing, and have fun are listed below and continue on page 2. For information on registration, children's programming, sponsored meals, and more, go to www.ucc.org. We hope you're looking forward to a great time **July 1-5 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta!**

It's not too late to volunteer

The heart of the hospitality that we as a Conference will extend to the wider church is the volunteers who will be active throughout General Synod. Volunteers will help with registration, staff the Conference booth, usher, assist with worship, and work in office support, stage management, sales, transportation, and more. You can choose opportunities that are convenient for you, and we will provide training — as well as a great T-shirt! A **training session for volunteers** will be held at the World Congress Center on **June 25 from 12-4 p.m.** Training for volunteers from outside the greater Atlanta area will take place closer to the time of General Synod. Volunteer registration forms are available from Da Vita CarterMcCallister at DMcCallister@thefund.org or Gerri Hudson at ghudson@secucc.org (800-807-1993).

For new churches

New church start pastors and members are invited to a pre-Synod program with Nancy Elsenheimer of the national UCC staff on **Thursday morning, June 30, from 8:30 a.m.-12 noon.** She will speak

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"I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL . . .
AND YOUR YOUNG SHALL SEE VISIONS AND
YOUR OLD SHALL DREAM DREAMS."

Acts 2:17

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Dear Friends,

It is like thunder in the distance: sounds of General Synod preparations, as July 1, the opening day, approaches.

Staff members begin to contend with details, committees make lists. Our heads are filled with thoughts of t-shirts, bags, rooms, worship, music,

hospitality, volunteers, crises erupting...and so we prepare. How will it be? A little wild, I suspect. And yet it is a marvelous opportunity for us to open our arms to the whole church and say, "Welcome to the South! Welcome to another corner of this 'heady, exasperating mix' we call the United Church of Christ!"

The Local Arrangements Committee, co-chaired by Bennie Liggins and Desiree Pedescleaux-Andrews, is meet-

ing monthly, and subcommittees are meeting in between. I have confidence that it will all come together, and with

your help and support, General Synod XXV will be a

wonderful occasion. We want you to take advantage of this opportunity to be a part of General Synod while it is in our backyard. Please plan to be with us and invite others from your congregation to join us. All the details can be found at www.ucc.org.

You can come as a volunteer or visitor and observe General Synod in its entirety, or you can come just for the worship services. Our volunteers will be visible from the registration table to the worship table. It is a rare privilege for a Conference to have an occasion to share with the whole church our sense of joy and pride at being the United Church of Christ in this place and time. I hope that you will mark July 1-5 on your calendar and join us at General Synod.

Peace,
Timothy C. Downs
Conference Minister

FROM THE
CONFERENCE
MINISTER



More General Synod opportunities

Continued from page 1

about guidelines for planting and evaluating new churches. Other special events for new churches will be held throughout the Synod. These include time with Conference staff members Timothy Downs, Bennie Liggins, and Cameron Trimble on **Monday, July 4, at 2 p.m.**, and an exploration of multi-ethnic churches with Angie Wright of Beloved Community United Church of Christ at **3 p.m.** For more information, contact Cameron Trimble at cameront@mind-spring.com.

Pre-Synod TAP convocation

Participants, facilitators, graduates, and "friends of TAP" (Theology Among the People) are invited to gather on **Thursday evening, June 30**, at Central

Congregational United Church of Christ in Atlanta for a convocation entitled **"Getting the Most out of General Synod."**

The program will last from **6-9 p.m.**, beginning with dinner. Featured speakers include UCC national staff members Hans Holznagel, who will facilitate a workshop entitled "General Synod 101," and Lynn Bujnak, who will discuss the history and implications of the Ministry Issues Proposal. This proposal, which will be presented for discussion and voting at General Synod, addresses, among other things, recognition of multiple paths of preparation for ministry. It and other proposed resolutions can be found on the UCC website, www.ucc.org. Cost for the TAP Convocation is \$20 and includes dinner and all materials. For more information or to register, contact Kathy Clark at kclark@secucc.org.

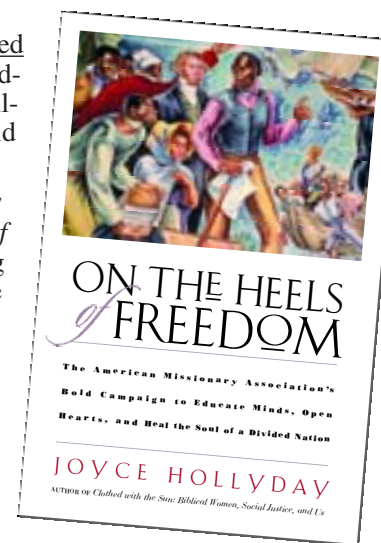
Sing with the massed choir

All are invited to sing with the General Synod XXV Massed Choir at the **closing worship service on Tuesday, July 5**. A rehearsal is scheduled for Monday, July 4, from 2-4 p.m. at the World Congress Center. You must sign up to participate. Please

email Fred Childers at fredchilders@ch13atl.com, sending him your full name, mailing address, church, and voice part.

Celebrate the AMA story

On the Heels of Freedom, the book growing out of the "Rekindle the Gift" ministry, which documents the legacy of the American Missionary Association, will be hot off the press at General Synod! **Morning prayer at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 3**, will be devoted to celebrating the AMA and our partners in this program. A **reception and book signing**, which will be held **Sunday evening after the community worship service**, will honor the members of our AMA congregations who shared their stories and Joyce Hollyday, Susan Mitchell, and Milton Hurst, who collected them. Look for more details at General Synod.



Bring your golf clubs

A **UCC Golf Outing** will take place after General Synod on **Wednesday, July 6**, at Bradshaw Farm Golf Club in Woodstock, Georgia. You are invited to play or be a sponsor of this important fund-raising event, which will help defray our General Synod costs as well

as support Neighbors in Need and the "Stillspeaking" initiative. All skill levels are welcome. The \$125 entry fee includes transportation from the Omni Hotel, a continental breakfast, a box lunch, 18 holes of golf with a cart, and a closing reception. For more information or to register, go to www.uccgolf.org.



TAP Program Continues to Grow

We give thanks for the TAP (Theology Among the People) groups meeting throughout the Conference:

Chattanooga, TN: Pilgrim Congregational UCC
Pleasant Hill, TN: Pleasant Hill Community Church
East Alabama-West Georgia Association (meeting at Lanett Congregational Christian UCC)
Montgomery, AL (UCC and Disciples of Christ, meeting at First Christian Church)
Midway, GA: Midway

Congregational UCC
Roswell, GA: Church of the Savior UCC
Stone Mountain, GA: Victory Church (two groups)
Atlanta, GA: First Congregational UCC

A group will be starting soon in south Georgia, serving Evergreen and Bethany churches. If you are interested in forming a TAP group in your congregation or area, contact Kathy Clark at kclark@secucc.org; 800-807-1993, ext. 2.

VOICES & VISIONS

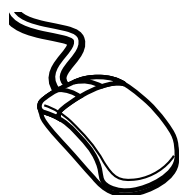
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Visit our website at
www.secucc.org

MARCH 19, 2005

Highlights from the Meeting of the Board of Directors

■ The **2005 Budget** was approved following a hearing open to all members of the Southeast Conference. It shows an anticipated deficit of \$36,000. Staff members are developing other sources of income to address this matter and encouraging congregations to take the guideline of tithing to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) Basic Support seriously.

■ The Local Arrangements Committee for General Synod XXV noted that special awards will be given during Synod to **Walter Brueggemann** and **Andrew Young**, as two members of the Southeast Conference who have made significant contributions to the United Church of Christ.

■ Associate Conference Minister **Kathy Clark** is serving as our staff liaison for worship planning for General Synod. She is helping to plan services, designing the stage and altar, and commissioning the baptismal font, chalices, and patens.

■ The Board of Directors authorized the hiring of **Cameron Trimble** and **Susan Mitchell**, to work eight hours a week each on General Synod logistics and developing relationships with new church starts and congregations opting into the "Stillspeaking" campaign.

■ **Salim UCC** was presented to the Board by its pastors, **Andrew and Sarah Kim**, and was accepted as a new church start.

■ **Peg and Herb Muenstermann** have been trained and are available to do **mission interpretation** in local con-

gregations on behalf of Wider Church Ministries.

■ Staff members will continue to develop our new motto, "**Abiding in Christ, Abounding in Hope**," as the vision of the Southeast Conference.

■ **Kathy Clark** reported that there are currently **eight TAP groups and 60 TAP participants** throughout the Conference. New groups have been started at **Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN**, and **First Congregational UCC, Atlanta**.

■ **Joyce Hollyday** reported that the completed manuscript for the book *On the Heels of Freedom* has been submitted to Crossroad Publishers and will be available by General Synod.

■ **Tim Downs** is currently serving on the Partnership Committee for the Alliance of Baptists, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the UCC; the Cabinet of the Council of Conference Ministers; the Board of Directors of Wider Church Ministries; and the Conference Ministers Advisory Committee on New Church Development.

■ The Board agreed to conduct the **election of the new Board** by paper ballots, which will be mailed to all elected delegates and authorized ministers in the Conference.

■ The Board will hold its **next meeting** at Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta, at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, July 6, after General Synod.



ABIDING IN CHRIST, ABOUNDING IN HOPE

Around the Conference

More than one hundred people gathered at Church of the Savior UCC in Knoxville, TN, April 22-23, for the **40th Annual Meeting of the Alabama-Tennessee Association**, entitled, "God is Still Speaking through Us!" Keynote speaker **J. Bennett Guess**, news director for the United Church of Christ, gave an excellent update on the impact of the national "God Is Still Speaking" campaign. Worship featured the praise team from First UCC, Sweetwater, Tennessee, and drummers from Church of the Savior. Association members elected and installed their new officers: **Ginny Nixon**, moderator; **Nancy Sales**, vice-moderator; **Jeanne Elrod**, treasurer; and **Robert Hurst**, member of the Church and Ministry Committee. They declared themselves a Whole Earth Association, endorsed the upcoming General Synod resolution entitled "Call for Environmental Education and Action," and committed themselves to having only Fair Trade coffee at Association functions and promoting the use of Fair Trade coffee in all congregations.



Rev. J. Bennett Guess addresses the Alabama-Tennessee Association.

On March 5, Virginia-Highland Church in Atlanta hosted the **spring meeting of the Georgia-South Carolina Association**. Conference staff members **Betsy Flory**, **Kathy Clark**, and **Tim Downs** gave presentations, offering an overview of the vision and mission of the Conference. They focused on new church development, congregational renewal, and the development of lay and ordained leadership for the emerging United Church of Christ.

Gerri Ryons-Hudson of the Southeast Conference staff and **Bette Graves Thomas** of First Congregational UCC in Atlanta attended the 18th annual **UCC Office Support Staff Network** meeting in St. Louis. The theme of the April 7-10 gathering was "Many Hearts, One Spirit." Gerri chaired the meeting and became the new president of the organization. Bette was elected secretary. Congratulations, Gerri and Bette! We are proud to be so well represented in the leadership of this important network.



New president Gerri Ryons-Hudson chairs the UCC Office Support Staff Network gathering.

This spring, Conference staff members **Tim Downs**, **Kathy Clark**, **Bennie Liggins**, **Betsy Flory**, **Susan Mitchell**, and **Joyce Hollyday** led revivals at **Bethany Congregational UCC in Thomasville, Georgia** (February 11-12);

Congregational Christian UCC in Lanett, Alabama (April 8-9); and **Plymouth Congregational UCC in Charleston, South Carolina** (April 29-30). The revivals included energetic preaching, music from local choirs, Bible studies, and workshops ranging from youth ministry and "Rekindle the Gift" to the TAP program and Afro-centrism in the UCC. **Joyce Hollyday** and **Bennie Liggins** provided Bible studies and preaching respectively at the **Graham Cluster regional stewardship event**, held April 25-27 on St. Simons Island, Georgia.



Members of Plymouth Congregational UCC in Charleston participate in a revival workshop.

Members of congregations from the **Alliance of Baptists, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the UCC** gathered for a revival at First Christian Church in Birmingham, AL, February 25-26. On April 13, members of these denominations in the **Nashville** area met at Vine Street Christian Church to further the knowledge of the ecumenical partnership in which we are engaged.

Victory Church, in Stone Mountain, GA, hosted a UCC youth event, sponsored by United Black Christians and featuring **DaVita CarterMcCallister** of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, **Susan Mitchell** of Sankofa UCC, Atlanta, and **Karl White** of Victory Church.

FROM THE MODERATOR

"It Will Change Your Life!"

By Dorothy Gager

"It will change your life!" That's the way a friend of mine used to describe a new recipe or restaurant. It was a bit of an exaggeration, although the food was always memorable, even if the experience was short-lived.

We in the Southeast Conference have an opportunity this summer that might *really* change our lives, and the effects can last a lifetime! I'm talking about General Synod in Atlanta.

I grew up in the United Church of Christ in this Conference, so I have always experienced the UCC as small, and I'm used to making an explanation every time someone asks me what church I attend. I had the great blessing of representing the Southeast Conference at previous Synods in Columbus, Ohio, and Providence, Rhode Island. I had known in my head that the denomination was bigger in other places, but nothing could have prepared me for the surge of joy in my heart when I worshiped with literally thousands of other members of the UCC at those Synods. For the first time in my life, I did not feel apologetic or insignificant as a member of the UCC. I was part of something much bigger and more alive than I had ever imagined.

Not everyone can take a whole week to attend a Synod, but most people can arrange to have at least a day or two in Atlanta. If you have a church bus or a van, load it up with people of all ages. There will be something for everyone. Even the business sessions can be interesting. But if that's not your idea of a good time, you can spend hours in the Exhibit Hall seeing all sorts of displays (and maybe even doing some early Christmas shopping, with your money going to good causes).

There will be lots of people there, representing the incredible diversity of this denomination. If you've ever wondered if anyone else in the UCC holds the same views as you, I can almost guarantee that you'll encounter individuals and organizations at Synod that will feel like soul mates.

After you've experienced General Synod, you'll never feel the same about the United Church of Christ. It will change your life!

Dramatic Games for Youth Ministry

Games can get a quiet group talking, but the right games used well can also be tools for deep critical and theological reflection, community building, discernment, and creative problem-solving. All people engaged in youth ministry, both lay and clergy, are invited to a fun-filled seminar on **Saturday, September 17, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at Church of the Savior United Church**

of Christ in Roswell, Georgia. David White of Emory University will lead participants in learning and playing dramatic games based on the work of Augusto Boal.

The games can then be used with youth to help them to connect their concrete lives and passions with faithful action in the world, to see the "hidden" social structures in which we live, and

to learn to resist or cooperate with these structures. The games also help them see play as a faithful act of relationship with fellow humans and God, and as a means of re-imagining the world in alignment with God's intentions for it.

The cost for the seminar, which includes lunch and a snack, is \$35. For more information or to register, contact Betsy Flory at 770-760-9111.

"The Spirit of the Mountain"

A work crew from Tennessee's Pleasant Hill Community United Church of Christ spent five days in April cleaning yards, painting walls and cupboards, and repairing a roof at the UCC Blowing Rock Conference Center in western North Carolina. Bill Bateman, who serves on the board of directors at the center, led the group, which also included Bob and Elaine Ahrendt, Jean and Don Clark, Martha and Willard Rabert, Jim Bowling, and Brandon Farlin.

They left behind a "Spirit of the Mountain" banner, designed by Mardelle Bourdon and constructed by Dorothea Bowling and Martha Gertonson, as a love-gift and reminder of their time together at the mountain retreat center. The banner is filled with symbols of faith, trust, hope, and survival, including mountains that signify "the experiences of life that challenge, stimulate, and nourish humankind."

Jean Clark



Members of the work crew stand in front of the "Spirit of the Mountain" banner.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

JUNE 2005

- 2 General Synod XXV Local Arrangements Committee (LAC) Meeting, First Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- 10-11 Youth Ministry Leadership Graduation, Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA
- 11 GA-SC Association Ecclesiastical Council, Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- 16 GS XXV LAC Meeting, First Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- 18 GS XXV Volunteer Team Captain Training, First Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- 24 ALA-TENN Church & Ministry Committee Meeting, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga
- 25 GS XXV Volunteer Training, World Congress Center, Atlanta

JULY 2005

- 1-5 General Synod XXV, World Congress Center, Atlanta
- 6 GS XXV Golf Outing, Woodstock, GA
- 6 Board of Directors Meeting, Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta
- 14-30 Whole Body of Christ "Seoul-Searching" Youth Trip to South Korea

CONCERNS AND CELEBRATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS

To **John Gill**, pastor of Church of the Savior UCC, in Knoxville, TN, who has accepted nomination to the Board of Directors of Wider Church Ministries, representing the Southeast Conference.

To **Ted Braun** of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, who received the Medal of Friendship from the Council of State of Cuba; his years of work as an advocate for understanding between the United States and Cuba have included 39 visits to Cuba.

To **Budd Friend-Jones**, pastor of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, who has been invited by the World Council of Churches to go to Geneva, Switzerland, June 6-10, to participate in a critical dialogue on interfaith relations.

To **Dick and Nancy Sales**, members of First Congregational Christian UCC, Birmingham, AL, who will be traveling back to Botswana and South Africa, where they served for many years under the sponsorship of the United Church Board for World Ministries.

To **Elizabeth Clement, Sue Man Chang**, and **Budd Friend-Jones**, all UCC ministers in Atlanta, who were featured in a story on spiritual healing in the spring edition of the magazine "Celebrating Diversity," published by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

To **First Congregational UCC, Savannah, GA**, which through a television program called *Divine Restoration* was able to complete a \$50,000 makeover of their kitchen and bathrooms; **First Congregational UCC, Atlanta**, also received money

through the program to renovate their computer lab. And to the members of **Circular Congregational Church**, Charleston, SC, who report that they have achieved pledges of \$950,000 toward their \$1,000,000 capital campaign goal.

To **United Church of Cookeville, TN**, and **Church of the Savior UCC, Roswell, GA**, who are now officially listed as Open and Affirming congregations.

OUR SYMPATHY

We mourn the passing of **Lala Allen** of Pleasant Grove Congregational Christian Church in Union Hill, AL. A teacher and member of the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame, Mrs. Allen was a generous supporter of the Southeast Conference, donating the land for the Allen Retreat Center.

The East Alabama-West Georgia Association has also lost **Bill Williams** of Pleasant Grove Church, who donated many hours to the upkeep of the Allen Retreat Center; **E.G. Clark**, who served churches of the Association for many years; and **Jim McAdams**, who served several churches, including the East Tallassee Congregational Christian Church in East Tallassee, AL, for more than 20 years.

We are saddened by the loss of **Roger Robbennolt**, a retired UCC pastor who was living in Pleasant Hill, TN, whose stories graced many Conference gatherings.

MINISTRY TRANSITIONS

Col. Lilton Marks, a member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, will be deployed on

June 26 as senior chaplain in Iraq. Prayers are requested for Lilton and his family, who are also mourning the death of his stepson, who died suddenly on March 22.

Dale Barrington was installed as pastor of First UCC, Belvidere, TN, on April 3. **Derrick Rice** was ordained, and he and **Susan Mitchell** were installed as co-pastors of Sankofa UCC in Atlanta, on April 15. A service of installation for **Kathy Robinson-Nelson** was held at Plymouth Congregational UCC in Charleston, SC, on April 30.

Toby Sanders of GSN Ministries, and **Linda Smith** of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, have been approved for ordination pending a call. **Rainelle Kimmel**, a chaplain at Atlanta's Northside Hospital and member of Church of the Savior in Roswell, GA, has been granted a transfer of ministerial standing from the Florida Conference. **Rhonda Pettit**, a pastoral counselor at Peachtree Presbyterian Church's counseling center and member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, was granted ministerial standing in the UCC.

Cameron Trimble, a member of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA, serving as minister for children and youth at Central Congregational and working part-time for the Conference, was granted student-in-care status and a license for ministry. Also received into in-care status were **Lisa Stewart**, a member of Virginia-Highlands Church in Atlanta; **Julie Mavity** of Central Congregational; and **Andrew and Sarah Kim**, members of Church of the Savior in Roswell, GA, and co-pastors of Salim UCC, Roswell.